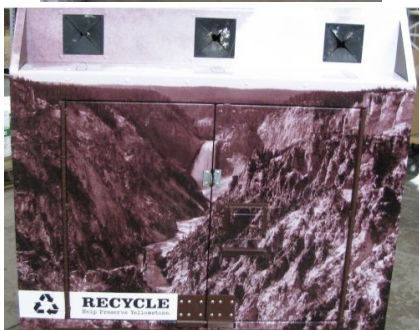


Clean Slate Group



Background:

Ryan Rickert, founder and president of Clean Slate Group, was vacationing in Canada when he noticed an opportunity. While waiting for the crosswalk, he saw that unwanted graffiti and adolescent "tagging" blighted the street corner. At the same time, Rickert noticed a crosswalk box wrapped with a vinyl map of the city. The clever use of a utility box made him wonder, "Why not use wraps to stop unwanted tagging?"

When Rickert returned to Bozeman, he called a friend at 3M™ to pitch his idea. Coincidentally, 3M™ had just finished developing a graffiti-resistant vinyl and the company was looking for someone to put it to use. As one of the only people with access to the exclusive product, Rickert founded Clean Slate Group. Ryan's company now employs the only team of vinyl installers in the region who are fully endorsed and certified by 3M™.

Rickert founded his company three years ago and due to the quality of his management and innovative products has experienced phenomenal growth. The company designs and manufactures vinyl wraps used to prevent graffiti and beautify commonly overlooked community assets such as garbage cans and power boxes. Ryan is a passionate and principled business owner who measures the success of his company with the double bottom line approach. In other words, Ryan is equally concerned with the profitability of the business and the impact it has on others.

Assistance:

Ryan has an impressive track record of advocating for small businesses in government. He has quite literally become the "poster child" for entrepreneurship and innovative business practices. As one of only five current Blackstone LaunchPad Representatives in the country, Rickert is honored as an alumnus who embodies the entrepreneurial spirit. With this distinction, Rickert serves as an adviser for Blackstone LaunchPad participants and other budding entrepreneurs. While Ryan has been tremendously resourceful in growing his business, the day to day skills necessary for managing the financials of his business were lacking.

The SBDC Director at Montana Community Development Corporation in Bozeman met with Ryan early in his business' growth and put together a strategic consulting plan that included trainings (he attended the Bozeman SBDC's Profit Mastery), working through and cleaning up his financials, improving hiring practices, establishing growth parameters and improving access to clients.

Impact:

In 2011, Clean Slate Group began with one employee. At the end of 2013, a staff of eight (operations manager, installers, designers, administrative), as well as three interns and various contract employees support of company. Growth in 2013 has created the need for additional staff and Clean Slate Group will be adding project managers and a chief financial officer in 2014. Sales growth at Clean Slate Group is best described in terms of vinyl usage. 500 square feet of vinyl was used in January 2013. By the end of December during the same year, 7,500 square feet of vinyl was used. Much of the 1400% increase comes from word-of-mouth buzz and improved communication strategies. West Yellowstone reached out to work with Clean Slate Group after seeing Bozeman's projects. Delaware North, Yellowstone Park's management company, loved West Yellowstone's project and asked Clean Slate Group to do the same inside the park. The same growth pattern continues today and CSG is continually working with the Bozeman SBDC to address new and unusual business issues on a monthly basis.

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